

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR MICROBIOLOGY

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June 12, 1998

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
The Rockefeller University
1230 York Ave.
New York, NY 10021-6399

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

Here is a stack of material copied from the ASM Archives relevant to Society activities touching on Biological Warfare. The chronology compiled in 1985 by Peter Hirtle provides the organization of the documents. The first page in each stapled packet of material has in its upper right corner a notation in brackets (e.g., "[8-I E, Folder 1]") which denotes the location in the archives of the folder from which it came, and a circled number which refers to the item on the chronology which it documents. I have appended a list of the packets which includes the full title of the folder, so you have an idea of provenance, etc.

I didn't necessarily copy everything from every folder, but I think everything of substance is here. I will continue doing a bit of looking in other areas of the collections and will let you know when anything else turns up.

My general sense of these documents is that in these years it was less a case of the Society taking a stand than of individual members attempting to encourage (or force) the Society to take a stand. It's necessary to remember that in 1954 the Society had been the loser in a tax judgment relating to its status as a non-profit, and had been forced to pay taxes back to 1947 (the year of incorporation in D.C.); it wasn't until 1957 that the appeal led to a 501(c)(6) status, and a refund of the back taxes. [In 1975 we were granted 501(c)(3) status.] A concern for tax status during these years may have led to a reluctance to take any overt political stance.

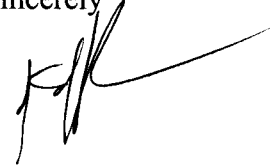
In addition, the Society was not a completely separate organization from the program at Detrick. A few years ago I put together some numbers from the membership directories for Riley Housewright (attached). As you can see, Detrick's representation among the membership was well out of proportion to the size of the geographical area. Riley and Dr. Baldwin may be able to provide some insight into the atmosphere of the times, although my sense is that Riley is pretty defensive about the whole BW issue.

One outcome of the whole Detrick Committee flap of 1967-68, of course, was the movement to establish a Public Affairs Committee, which was finally accomplished in 1973, leading to the Board of Public and Scientific Affairs in 1978.

I know this is a lot of material, and I apologize if much of it is not directly relevant to your inquiry. It seems less to document specific actions of the Society than the discussions about what a society ought to do in this arena. I think that's still an interesting question.

Please let me know if I can be of any further help.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JK' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that extends to the right.

Jeff Karr, Archivist